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## THE SUPERNUMERARY CLASS.

It is walking through the streets of a great town, one might suppose it an easy matter to classify, at least in a general manner, the industrious inhabitants. From the grave merchant to the busy shopkeeper, and from him to the lowest stall-vender, all have their peculiar avocations; nay, even the street beggar may seem in some way to belong to the category, since mendicancy is with him a regular profession. But, after having appeared to go through the whole circle of industry, we still find a busy and numerous class left out, which it is impossible to place under any of the heads we may have imagined. They have no trade, no tools, no masters, and yet are never idle when they can help it; they have no home, no family, no friends, and yet rarely want a meal and a bed; they have no functions, no duties, no privileges of citizens, and yet are integral portions of the community to which they belong, and come in various ways into social and business contact with their fellows.

In London they form a portion—but only a portion—of that class whose name the statisticians tell us is *Legion*, who rise up every morning without knowing where or how to get their breakfast. In this numerous tribe, however, are included beggars, thieves, and others who look to the chances of their disreputable professions; whereas the individuals we allude to are not necessarily dishonest or ill-conducted, and have no calling whatever. They have nothing to do, but are willing to do anything; they have nowhere to go, but will readily go anywhere; they trust entirely to the chapter of accidents for their daily bread; and when they lie down at night, without a farthing in their pockets, and without a claim upon the pallet they occupy extending beyond the next morning, they congratulate themselves on having eaten and drunken throughout the day, and look forward with confidence to the morrow.

I have said that they are not necessarily dishonest; but occasionally, when hard pressed, they have recourse to expedients that have little beyond ingenuity to recommend them. The morning, for instance, is a trying time, when the appetite is good, the air keen, and all those classes still in bed with whom it is possible to transact business without capital. It is necessary to begin the day; but how is it to be begun by one who has no money, no calling, no credit, who will not steal, and who is ashamed to beg? Then must come the expedients I have hinted at; and one of these I can relate from personal observation, since it is to it I owe my knowledge of the hitherto unclassified species I would describe.

One morning, then, in the course of an early walk on the New Road, I was stopped by a group of passers-by, who had gathered round a young man engaged in rather

a singular occupation. He wore a sleeved waistcoat and small-clothes, and might have been taken for a groom long out of place. His hat lay upon the ground, and he was busy filling it with small stones from a heap at a little distance, walking rapidly, but not running, between the two points, and with such an earnest and anxious expression of countenance, that I could not refrain from asking what was the matter.

'A bet!' was the reply; and the bystander I had addressed bestowed upon his ignorant questioner a momentary glance of mingled surprise and contempt. He seemed, like the rest, to be an operative in some manufactory; and after an obvious struggle between his sense of duty and curiosity, laid down several halfpence near the hat, in token of his approbation of the young man's activity and of his good wishes for his success, and hurried away. This example was speedily followed, though less liberally, by one or two others of the group, for the hour forbade any dallying, and I at length found myself alone with the stone-picker. He looked at me for an instant, and then along the road; but there being no appearance of any more customers worth waiting for, he picked up the halfpence, shook the stones from his hat, and clapping it on his head, like a man who has got well through some laudable employment, walked off. But I was not disposed to part with him so easily.

'So you have won your bet?' said I, overtaking him; 'and you are now, I presume, for breakfast?'

'Not yet,' replied he after a moment's hesitation, during which I could see him scrutinise me from head to foot; 'what is fourpence-halfpenny? How do I know that anything else will turn up between this and dinner-time?'

'What do you mean to do, then, to increase the sum? Do you mean to make another bet with yourself?'

'No, no; that is well enough in its way when there is nothing else to be done; but I have now got a capital to begin the day with. There are worse dodges than picking up stones; but it is not respectable. I will turn these browns, master, into a white shilling before long, if I once make up my mind what lay to go upon.'

'I will put you upon a plan,' said I: 'tell me how you live, and where you live—give me a distinct notion of what you do to earn your bread for the whole day, and you shall have the shilling without further trouble.'

'That would not be so easy,' replied he, 'as picking up stones. Bless you, I live now and nowhere, and I earn my bread just as it happens!'

'Then tell me *how* it happens: give me the history of a single day, so that it be a common day, and I shall not grudge the money.' Upon this hint he spake; and I am able, from the conversation that ensued, to make a somewhat curious, though melancholy contribution, to the history of social life.

This young man, who may be taken as the repre-

many a time peeped children's curious faces, and little mischievous hands often dropped down flowers and pebbles on the stray passers-by. On the other side of the road a raised pathway led to the church—a Norman erection, old and quaint enough to charm Dr Dryasdust himself. In the churchyard was a village school-room, like a barn, and from thence rushed out daily a small troop of children, chasing the sheep that fed among the graves. Dr Renwick's was the great house of the place; rich in the glories of a gravel entrance and bay windows; and oh, such an orchard! Never was seen the like for apples and pears! But now it looked cold and stately in the gloom of a December night—starry, but moonless. A light covering of hoarfrost lay on the green plot, where, in early spring, snowdrops and crocuses peeped out from the grass, looking prettier than they ever do when set in the cold brown mould of a garden bed. A warm light streamed over the gravel walk through the half-drawn crimson curtains. Any passenger on the road would have said there was mirth and comfort within.

And so indeed there was; for it was the yearly gathering of the Renwick family, of which Dr James Renwick was now the eldest son. Three generations were met once more in the eyes of the doctor's aged parents, who lived with him. They were now too old to have the care of an establishment of their own; and therefore this year the family meeting was held at Dr Renwick's house, where they were spending the decline of life with their good and dutiful son.

Contrary to general English usage, the yearly gathering of the Renwicks was not held on Christmas-day. This was partly because old Mr Renwick thought the day too much of a religious festival for frolic and sport. He had come from the land where his namesake preached, lived, and died among his persecuted brethren; and though Mr Renwick had been so long in England, that the memory of the heathery mountains and braes of his native land was like a dream, still he clung a little to the ways of his forefathers. Besides, it was on one Christmas-day that death had first crossed his threshold, and carried away their eldest born from the young parents, with bitter tears. It was many years since; but still they felt that to have merrymaking on that day would be treading in the shadow of a sorrow now gone by; so the day had ever since been changed from Christmas to New-Year's eve.

Mr Renwick and his wife had been blessed with many children. Their quiver was full of arrows; and they did not murmur at it. Out of ten sons and daughters, five were with them that day; some wedded, with children of their own; one was travelling in foreign lands; and three had gone the way of all before them. But the parents did not count these lost. One only—though living—had been, and, to use the touching words of a father of old, 'was not.'

Dr James Renwick was the worthy son of a good father, and well did he occupy the station and fulfil the duties of a country physician. These duties are very different from those of a London practitioner. In a village 'the doctor' is an important person, second only to the clergyman. He has more to do than merely to heal the bodies of his neighbours. If he be respected, he knows all the affairs of the parish; it is he to whom all come for advice in distress; he is the mediator between helpless poverty and benevolent but cautious wealth; and much good or much evil may he do, as his will leads him. Dr Renwick was a good man, and he was accordingly respected. He had married early a wife of like feelings to himself, and they had brought up a rising family, the elder branches of whom were now men and women. Two brothers and a sister of the doctor were also round his table with their flock, few or many as it might be; so that the grandfather and grandmother looked on a tribe of juveniles as various in years, and name, and appearance, as ever clustered round the chair of age since the patriarchal days.

Mr and Mrs Renwick sat beside the fire, looking

cheerfully around them. A dozen or more young cousins were dancing to the music of a piano and flute, while the elders played whist in an inner room. One or two quiet couples stole away into corners; they were too happy to dance and laugh with the rest. Among these was Isabel Renwick, the doctor's youngest and unmarried sister. The old parents looked at her as she stood with her betrothed in the shade of the crimson curtains.

'We shall have another fine tall son-in-law by this time next year, Letty, my dear,' whispered the old man to his wife with a merry smile.

'Don't talk nonsense before the children,' answered Mrs Renwick, trying to frown as she wiped her spectacles.

'Well, I always thought little Bell was the prettiest of all our children, and she will marry best, though last,' said the proud father. 'Little Bell' was a beautiful young woman of seven-and-twenty, whom no arguments could hitherto induce to quit her father's roof, until an old playmate returned from India, rich in money, and richer still in love, that time could not change. So Isabel was to be married at last.

The dance ended, and the various grandchildren sat down to rest, or walked idly about, arm-in-arm, talking and laughing.

'Do you know what a grand ball Aunt Hartford is giving to-night at the Priory?' said Jessie Renwick to her cousin William Oliphant.

'I doubt if they will be half so merry as we, nevertheless, with all their grandeur.'

'Who is speaking about Mrs Hartford—of my eldest daughter?' said the grandfather sharply. 'Would that she had been no daughter of mine!'

'Hush, John, hush!' whispered his aged wife, laying her withered fingers on his arm.

'Jessie only said that there was a grand party at the Priory to-night,' answered young Oliphant, for his cousin had shrunk aside, alarmed at her grandfather's harsh tone, so unusual to him.

'Let her go with all her pride and her gaieties! There is no blessing on an ungrateful child,' said Mr Renwick sternly. 'When she was born, her mother and I rejoiced, and we called her Letitia in our gladness; but she has been to us a bitter sorrow, and no joy. Do not speak of her, my children.'

The young people saw that there was deep sadness on their grandmamma's face, and that Mr Renwick's tone, though severe, was tremulous; so they did not again mention Mrs Hartford's name. The younger ones wondered; but many of the elder cousins knew of their aunt's great wealth, suddenly acquired by her husband's speculations; and how with wealth had come pride, and with pride coldness and disdain, so that at last Mr and Mrs Hartford were self-exiled from the family circle, and only known by hearsay to the children.

After a season, the slight shadow which poor Jessie's unlucky speech had thrown over the circle passed away. William Oliphant, ever thoughtful in those little things which make the sum of home-happiness, adroitly brought to his grandmother's chair the two youngest of the flock, Mrs Walter Renwick's bonnie little girl and boy, and the old lady's attention was diverted. She took Bessie on her knee, and told Henry a fairy tale, and thought no more of her own lost daughter. How much good had been done by this unnoticed ruse of kind William Oliphant!

Merrily passed the closing hours of the Old Year. The children danced again, and then Aunt Isabel was introduced to sing, and the plaintive music of her voice changed the laughter into a pensive but pleasant silence. After a minute or two they all thanked her cheerfully. They did not know—the careless children!—that of all the merry troop around her, Isabel had sung but for one, and to one. After a while the mirth grew noisier; the light-hearted troop would chorus Aunt Isabel's songs; and so those who could sing, and those who thought they could, all chimed in together, to the utter con-

fusion of treble, tenor, and bass. But there was so much happiness and harmony in their hearts, that no one cared for a little musical discord.

Supper came, for 'not even love can live upon air.' Abundance of mirth was there amidst the good things, particularly when the splendid dish of *trifle* came on, and little Bessie Renwick got the ring, and Aunt Isabel the ill-omened spence! It actually made her look grave for a minute, though, until her lover whispered something that made her smile and blush. There was little fear of Isabel dying an old maid! The time passed so quickly, that only just had the happy circle drank the healths of grandpapa and grandmamma, and grandpapa had returned thanks in a few touching words, which made them grave in the midst of their fun, when, lo! the clock struck twelve!

And now came the grand ceremony. Dr James Renwick rose up with great solemnity of visage. Nothing made them laugh so much as to see the mock gravity of merry Uncle James. Bearing a light in each hand, the doctor went to his hall-door, followed by the whole troop. What a noise and confusion did they make in the narrow old-fashioned passage ycleped the hall! And now, the lights being resigned to the care of his eldest son, Dr Renwick unfastened the bolts, and the door flew open, letting in, besides the New Year, such a gust of biting January night-wind as nearly extinguished the candles, and made the whole party shiver and hasten to the warm drawing-room with great celerity.

Just as Dr Renwick was about to close the door, and retire alone, some one called him from without.

'Wait a minute, doctor, pray. I want you, sir, if you please.'

'Some patient, I suppose,' said the doctor. 'Well, come in, friend; it is too cold to stand talking outside.'

The man came in, and Dr Renwick and his untimely visitor retired to the study.

'What has become of Uncle James?' was soon the general cry, and some of the more daring of the youngsters rushed up and down the house in search of him. He was found in the study alone, but he looked very grave, and it was no pretence now.

'I cannot go up stairs again,' he said; 'I have to go out immediately.' The children intreated, and Mrs James Renwick expostulated, knowing that her husband had no patients on his list likely to require him at that time of night; until at last grandpapa sent down to know what was the matter.

'I am sure there is no need for you to leave us in this way, James,' said the old man rather querulously; 'and at least you might tell us where you are going.'

'I had rather not,' said the plain-spoken James Renwick; 'but if you still ask me, father, I will tell you.'

'Yes; tell us now.'

'Well, then, it is to my sister's; to Mrs Hartford's.'

'What business have you with her?' cried the angry old man; 'what have you to say to the grand party?'

'There is no gaiety at the Priory to-night, but much sorrow,' answered Dr Renwick gravely. 'Arthur Hartford met with a dreadful accident this afternoon; he is still insensible, and his mother is almost frantic by the bedside of her only son.'

There was a gloomy silence over the party at these words. Old Mrs Renwick began to weep; but her husband said harshly, 'She deserves it; and yet I am sorry. I always heard good of young Arthur. Did she send for you?'

'No; only old Ralph—you remember him—came to tell me, and he begged me to go, for both Mr and Mrs Hartford are almost beside themselves with grief, and the doctor they have knows nothing at all.'

'You shall not go, James Renwick; no child of mine shall enter that ungrateful woman's doors without being intreated to do so,' said the old man.

Dr Renwick had been accustomed all his life to render obedience to his father; often, indeed, to a degree very unusual in a son who had himself become the head of a family. Even when the old man's commands were

harshly and unduly expressed, the good doctor seldom showed any open opposition, so strong was the force of habit and of filial respect. Therefore he now only said, 'Father, have you thought what you do in saying I shall not go. The boy has no proper assistance; he may die, and then—'

Mr Renwick's stern lineaments relaxed a little of their expression, but he made no answer. Then his aged wife took his hand, and looking at him with swimming eyes, said mournfully, 'John, remember when our own Arthur died twenty years ago; if any one had kept help away from him then! And Letty was his favourite sister; and the boy is our own grandchild, and named after him too. John, dear husband, do not be harsh; let James go!'

Many others joined their imploring voices to the aged mother's, and Mr Renwick was softened; but still he would scarcely yield his authority.

'I will neither say yea nor nay; let James do as he pleases: I will hear no more of this.'

Dr Renwick stayed not a moment, lest his father's mood should change, but was gone on his errand of mercy.

There was no more merriment for the young people that night; they were all too deeply touched. The aged pair soon retired, and the various families departed to their several homes. In an hour all was quiet in the doctor's house. Mrs James Renwick alone sat waiting her husband's return, and thinking over in her kind heart how this might end. Every other eye was sealed in repose save one, and that was the aged mother's.

On New-Year's morning the family met as usual; Dr James Renwick looked pale and careworn, but he did not speak of his last night's visit. The grandfather did not allude to it neither, and no one else dared mention the subject in his presence. At last the children separated to their various avocations, and Mr and Mrs Renwick were left alone with James and his wife. There was an uneasy silence, broken only by the clicking sound of the old lady's knitting, which she pursued busily, though her fingers trembled, and several heavy tears dropped on the work. At last the doctor rose and walked to the window, observed that it was a gloomy day, and began searching for his gloves.

'Before you go out, James,' said Mrs Renwick, with an evident effort at unconcern, 'you might as well say how that boy is?'

'You mean poor Arthur? He is better. I think he may recover.'

'Thank God for that!' murmured the old lady fervently.

'Did you see Letty—Mrs Hartford I mean?' asked the father after a pause.

'I did,' answered the doctor concisely.

'Dear James, tell us all that passed?' whispered the poor old mother. Mr Renwick turned over the pages of a book, but he made no opposition; while the doctor sat down beside his mother and began to tell his story.

'When I reached the Priory, all was confusion. Poor Letty was in violent hysterics. I heard her screams the moment I entered the house, so I knew it was of no use asking to see her. The father, they told me, was hanging over his insensible boy. I sent word to him that I had come to offer what assistance I could; and he was with me in a moment, wringing my hands, and imploring me to save poor Arthur. I never thought how misery could have bent the man's proud spirit. Mr Hartford, who passed me but yesterday without a glance, would now have knelt to intreat me to forget the past, and do what I could for his son.'

'And you did—you were successful, James?' said old Mrs Renwick anxiously.

'Yes; after a time the boy came to his senses: he is a fine fellow! He knew me directly, and looked so joyfully from me to his father, who had clasped my hand in overpowering gratitude.'

'And poor Letty?' again asked the weeping mother.

'When she was a little calmer, I went to her with

Mr Hartford. She started at seeing me; but her husband said, "Letty, you must thank your brother for saving Arthur's life." And then she threw herself into my arms, and poured forth such a torrent of thanks, and blessings, and self-reproaches, that it almost made a child of me. Poor Letty! she is much altered," added the good doctor, his voice growing husky as he looked steadily into the fire.

All this time the stern old father had not uttered a word.

For a few minutes none of the party spoke. At last Mrs Renwick glanced timidly at her husband, and whispered, "Did she say anything about us, James?"

"Yes, mother, she asked after you both, said how glad she always was to hear of you in any way, and wept much when she spoke of you."

Mr Renwick lifted up his head; he had bent his face on his hands lest they should see the working of his features, and said, "What truth, think you, is there in that woman's tears, when not a week since, she passed her old father and mother in the road; she riding in her splendid carriage, and the mother that bore her trudging wearily on foot; and she never looked towards us, but turned her head another way? Do you think I can forgive that, James Renwick?"

"I have forgiven her, John," said the old lady. "She is our own child, and she is in trouble; she may repent now for the past."

"I know she does," added James earnestly. "She told me how she longed to see you; even her husband seemed sorry: he speaks kindly to her, though people say he is so proud."

"And they expect that your mother and I will go humbly to their fine house?" cried the still incensed old man.

"No, father; that was not what my sister said. She told me to say she prayed you to forget the past, and let her come and see you here, and be your daughter Letty once more."

Dr Renwick stopped, for he saw that his father was actually weeping. James looked at his wife, and she left the room. For several minutes the aged couple sat with their hands clasped together in silence; then Mr Renwick said in a broken voice, "Tell Letty she may come."

"She will come—she is come! my dear father," cried James as the door opened, and Letty flung herself on her knees before her parents, and was clasped to both their hearts with full and free forgiveness. The erring child was pardoned—the lost one was found!

Dr Renwick and his wife went silently away together, with full and thankful hearts for the good which had been effected that day. It was their best reward.

There was deep joy throughout the whole of the Renwick family when they heard the news. Some of the younger and gayer spirits thought how pleasant it would be to visit now at Aunt Hartford's beautiful house, and ride Cousin Arthur's fine horses, when he recovered. But with more sincerity and disinterested pleasure did the elders rejoice that there was now no alienation to pain their aged father and mother in their declining years, but that they would now go down to the grave in peace, encircled by a family of love.

Arthur Hartford recovered speedily under his uncle's care. He was indeed a noble boy, resembling, both in person and character, the lost Arthur; so no wonder that he soon became the darling of the grandparents. The leaves were hardly green on the trees before there was a joyful family meeting; for it was the wedding of Aunt Isabel; and there were now no absent ones to mar the happiness of the festivity, for even the sailor had returned.

"That speech of yours turned out not so very unlucky after all," whispered William Oliphant to his cousin Jessie, who hung on his arm, as of old: they were always great friends.

"No," answered the laughing girl; "I dare speak of Aunt Hartford now without fear."

"And see how happy grandmamma looks! I heard her say that Aunt Hartford was almost as handsome as the bride, though I think Aunt Isabel is much superior."

"Well, never mind, William; we are all very happy; it has all turned out like a fairy tale; and I am sure we can say with truth that this has been for us all a happy New Year."

## THE FOREST OF ARDEN.

EVER since I first perused that most delightful play of Shakespeare, 'As You Like It,' the very name of which calls up visions of woods and brooks, and all the poetic charms of sylvan life, I entertained a longing desire to visit the Forest of Arden; but it was not till last year that I found time for this pilgrimage to a scene consecrated by our great English dramatist. Arden, or, as it is now called, Ardennes, is a district in the southern and little-frequented part of Belgium. Travellers pouring towards the Rhine leave it on the right, and unless penetrated for a special object, this interesting region remains untouched by the wandering tourist.

It is not without good reason that Arden has been little frequented by strangers. The scenery is mountainous, wild, and curious in the extreme, but has no pretension to the sublime; and from the irregularity of its surface, it does not afford the opportunity for that rapid transit which English tourists in particular so much prize. Yet to those who can afford to spend a fortnight loitering amidst its woods, dells, and antique towns, what scene could be more productive of pleasing objects of contemplation? Twenty years ago, the more secluded part of Arden was a kind of terra incognita to all but those born in it. When the late Mr Inglis about that time passed a winter at St Hubert, its principal town, the people there had never seen an Englishman. 'The third day,' he says, 'after my arrival, when the girl was laying the cloth for dinner, she suddenly stopped her work, and addressing me, said, "Mais Monsieur êtes vous vraiment un Anglais?" and upon my assuring her that I was, she continued to look at me for some moments as I should look upon an inhabitant of Terra del Fuego.' At that time there was no road nearer than the Meuse passable for a public vehicle. What was then meant by a road, was a track for a cart, distinguishable from the country only from the circumstance of there being less grass or heath upon it. All this is altered now. Capital macadamised roads are cut right across the district; decent inns, still few and far between, have sprung up along them; public conveyances, to the number of twenty, traverse it daily, and the passengers they convey are no longer exclusively natives. Hither flock crowds of tourists and wandering artists—French, Belgians, and Germans; and amongst them, every now and then, appears a solitary Briton, on his way to the Moselle and the more beaten regions of the Rhine.

It was a glorious September morning when I left a motley group of this description, and turning my back upon the Meuse and the picturesque old town of Dinant, began immediately to ascend by a capital new road which leads across the country to Metz in France. The day was favourable for walking; clouds drifting at intervals over the sun, threw the steep hill-sides into that alternate light and shadow so dear to the artist, and enabled me to gaze at ease, free from that unsleeping enemy the sun. The road ascends uninterruptedly for two miles, showing the great depth of the Meuse valley below the level of the country, and then the dry fresh air blows freely round, and we step forth at once upon the lofty upper region. About six miles in advance is a noble piece of scenery, hill, wood, and glen, each on the largest scale, intermingling around the road, which is borne across the opening upon an astonishing embankment. A cottage, with its never-ceasing mill, snugly nestled in the bottom, lent the requisite touch of humankind; and the whole seemed just the



scene where one might fancy the banished duke, with his sylvan court, to have taken their noontide rest. This, however, was a brief interlude. The country hereabouts, and for miles in advance, is called the Famille; a good corn country, but with little to interest, and presents the same unvaried succession of round-backed hills, each like the other, with occasional glens, which are beautiful when found, but cannot be seen from the road. At a little distance on the right, King Leopold has his country-seat of Ardenne; small, but finely placed in a most solitary situation. The king is often here, for the advantage of hunting; and his frequent residence has done as much as anything to bring the country forward. Besides the palace, a roadside inn, bearing the royal arms, was the only habitation in sight, where a party of Ardenais (so the men of the Ardenne are called) were just commencing their dinner; and as our appetites by this time were pretty sharp-set, we gladly accepted their invitation to join them.

The company consisted, besides the host, of four strapping Ardenne farmers, in their blue blouses, and four of the royal guard, in all the finery of spurs, tassels, and worsted epaulettes. There was nothing very particular about them; but the dinner was a curiosity, and worth detailing, as a specimen of how the substantial country-folks contrive to live in this part. After the usual thin soup, and the meat from which the said soup had been extracted, which are the first dishes presented all over the continent, there was placed on the table by a heavy-built damsel, with flaming red petticoat and massive gold ear-rings, a huge dish of smoking mutton cutlets, with apple-sauce, flanked by dishes of carrots and potatoes; then came a platter of shelled beans stewed, a common dish here; then an immense bowl of apples, cut into halves, and stewed, followed by roast fowls, with excellent mushrooms; and then some preparation of meat, which I could not identify by taste or sight, and exceedingly tough. By this time our appetites were pretty well blunted; but the carver, unappased, began whetting his blade, and all was expectation, till a noble Ardenne ham made its appearance, forest-fed, and with a strong smack of what we may fancy to be the wild-boar flavour, supported by craw-fish, smoking hot, and no less than four immense fruit-pies, served up in wicker platters, and a foot at least in diameter. For the whole repast, the sum asked was one franc (nineteen three-farthings), and for which we might have had fruit and coffee in addition if we had pleased. The raw materials at home could hardly have been given for three times the sum.

After such a meal, I shall make but one step from this to Rochefort, ten miles farther on. The country continues the same, and the only thing remarkable is the magnificent construction of the road, which is borne across deep valleys, and cut through hills, in a manner more resembling the great works upon a principal railway line, than an untravelled road in a remote district. Rochefort gets its name from a castle on a height, the ruins of which are still considerable, and worth a visit; but its chief attraction is its containing the only decent inn within walking distance of the great caverns of Hane, where the turbulent river Lesse forces its way through a barrier of hills, and flows through a long succession of stalactite caverns for a mile and a half before it emerges into day.

Another ten miles farther on is the ancient town of St Hubert, and half-way between Rochefort and St Hubert a solitary oak, at the bottom of a steep ascent, marks the beginning of Ardenne proper—the Arden of the poet. The sun was now fast sinking, when the outskirts of the great forest of St Hubert appeared close at hand; and deep black masses of timber-trees sweeping round the horizon, and at this instant overhung by heavy thunder-clouds, looked imposing and gloomy enough. The trees have been cleared away for about a mile on each side of the town, and in the open space stands St Hubert, a miserable collection of small houses, sur-

rounding one of the finest churches in Belgium. Here, as the legend goes—which the peasantry all devoutly believe—Hubert, the mighty hunter, while pursuing his favourite diversion on Good-Friday eve, beheld a stag bearing a cross between its horns. The apparition, which he believed to be miraculous, and to be sent from Heaven, recalled him from his evil course of life. He became a holy man, so as to work miracles not merely by his hands, but by his garments; so that even a shred of his mantle possessed virtue enough to cure hydrophobia, if placed on the patient's head; and all hunters henceforth regarded him as their patron saint. The abbey church, supposed to be built on the very site of his cell, is still a great place of pilgrimage, and the government has of late years annually given a considerable sum towards its restoration, besides which, it has received magnificent presents from the queen. Externally, it is a square substantial building, only with a high-peaked roof, but the interior is dazzling. The Ardenne is a marble country, and everything is marble in the church, from the pavement and pillars to the smallest ornament—red, white, and black marbles in more than royal profusion.

Our evening's walk to Champlon was not quite so joyous as that of the morning had been; for by this time we could say with Touchstone, 'I care not for my spirits, if my legs were not weary.' About two miles from St Hubert we re-entered the forest, and walked on, without meeting a soul during two hours, to Champlon, between rows of forest-trees, so closely set, that the momentary glimpses between the trunks showed like darkness visible, while from out of their depths the long whine of a wolf followed us with disagreeable distinctness. Not being used to such attendants, the first sensation was anything but pleasant, and I for one could have once more echoed Touchstone's opinion, 'Here I am in Arden, the more fool I; when I was at home, I was in a better place.' Late in the night we reached Champlon, and having succeeded at last in obtaining comfortable rooms, were soon happy in the full enjoyment of a good night's rest. When the bright sun came to light up all, we found, to our surprise, that the dismal gloom of the foregoing night, with its thick impenetrable shade of tall straight trunks, had changed into the prettiest sylvan scene imaginable. Huge oaks and beeches, side by side, flung their massive arms and coronals of leaves over an emerald green turf, with long vistas of light, and sudden breaks opening up between them into the inmost recesses of the woods; the ash, the hazel, and the birch mingled with these their lighter tints, as in a natural plantation; and alders and willows fringed the many rapid brooks which gurgled on the bottoms, or stagnated in solitary tarns, covered with the dazzling petals of the *nymphaea palustris*, and other great water-lilies. Still, the farther we strayed, the greater was the variety; for the forest contains all in itself—wild heaths, scattered rivers and pools, hamlets, villages, and towns, which might elsewhere seem considerable, but are here fairly subdued, and appear as nothing among the wilderness of woods. 'It is not,' as Inglis says, 'like the woods which one is accustomed to in England, stretching over plains or the sides of the hills. It encloses within it every diversity of hill and dale—deep ravines, wide valleys, rocky steeps, high hills, rivers, streams, and lakes, presenting a combination of the most striking and diversified scenery. We trod upon a carpet of the greenest velvet; the long arms of the rugged pine or the branching oak occasionally met overhead, while here and there the trees receded, and formed little amphitheatres of surpassing beauty; sometimes the path descended into deep dells, sometimes it climbed abrupt precipices; brooks frequently obstructed its progress, often with no bridge over them, and at times with one formed of the trunks of trees. Sometimes at the opening of a forest vista a deer would bound across; sometimes at sudden turnings little animals of the ferret tribe would be seen for an instant, and then be heard rustling through the thick brush-

wood.' Just as Inglis describes we wandered on through the day, and when twilight came, blending everything in its uniform dusky hue, we returned to our inn, fully convinced that this was Shakspeare's Arden, and no other.

The correspondence, indeed, between the poetic description and the reality is curiously exact, considering the scenes described were unknown to the poet. The savage touches indeed are wanting; the 'green and gilded snake,' and the 'lioness with udders all drawn dry,' from which Orlando delivered his tyrant brother, existed only in the imagination; and though wolves there are, they are as unlike as possible to their hungry brethren of the Russian steppes—peaceable animals, well fed by royal orders, to be slain in state by great personages on great occasions. But the spirit and character are given to the life, and it is difficult to believe, when thus on the spot, that Shakspeare wrote without actual knowledge of the ground. We know that he never was out of England, so that his details are purely imaginary; yet few travellers would doubt that he had often been here. Everywhere the wanderer is tempted to identify the names in the poem with the spots before his eyes. He even begins to conjecture about time and place, and to ask himself where the forester lords most lived, and how long they had led their pleasant life under the greenwood tree. He concludes that it was assuredly summer when Jacques laid himself down at his length under an oak to pore upon the brawling brook; and one winter they would seem to have braved among the oaks, and had learned by experience what it is to endure the icy pangs and chiding of the winter's wind when in Arden, where the snow lies from November till March. The reason seems to be that which Coleridge assigns; namely, that Shakspeare does not give a description of rustic scenery merely for its own sake, or to show how well he can paint an actual object: he only touches upon the larger features and broader characters, leaving the filling-up to the imagination. Thus a few very brief touches give the glimmer and gloom of old trees; so that all the details of the well-known landscape by Sir George Beaumont, now in the National Gallery, are suggested in fourteen words: but what words these are, and how each of these fourteen words helps out the picture! The like has been remarked of Sir Walter Scott's descriptions of scenes which he had never personally visited, and is probably true of every great imaginative observer of nature.

The constant perception of natural phenomena which they lack the knowledge to explain, the sights and sounds of nature in her wilder moods, but especially in forests, the roaring and whistling of the wind through the trees, the cries of nocturnal beasts and birds, and the fitting and reappearing of marsh-lights and exhalations—are all eminently calculated to make an uneducated peasantry superstitious; and the foresters of Arden are no exceptions to the rule. Hero flourish undisturbed many of those beliefs and observances which extended reading is effectually putting to rout on our northern borders, together with some peculiar to the district. The belief in the existence and agency of good and evil spirits is more or less prevalent, and mountain spirits, dwarfs, and domestic goblins abound. The principal spirits are a kind of 'lubber fiend,' called Sotays, corresponding exactly with the Scottish brownies. They work hard, like the brownies, for those they take a fancy to: thrash the corn, and winnow it, mow the hay, clean the house, and rub down the horses; their customary reward for which is a bowl of milk. The ruined castles which abound hereabouts are believed to be under the peculiar tutelage of a class of evil spirits called 'gattes d'or,' from the Wallon *gatt*, a goat. The worship of the goddess Diana, the ancient tutelary genius of the Ardennes, long held its ground against the priests; and on certain festivals, not many years ago, was displayed a mysterious banner, with the likeness of a centaur, half-woman, half-horse, ending in a lion's tail, holding a bow in its right hand, and an arrow in its left, for which the peasantry,

who held it in the highest reverence, could give no explanation, but which the learned have agreed to be a relic of the worship of Diana.

It may be concluded, from the above, that the Ardennes are not peculiarly enlightened, which is true; but it is only fair to them to add, that, with the intelligence, they likewise lack some of the besetting vices of people living in large masses. A more simple people does not exist. It would be easy to speak of their valour and military qualities, when, like the Swiss, they served in the armies of Spain and France; but a more honourable distinction is their unflinching industry, together with the patience they display under calamity. The traveller cannot fail to be struck, in Belgium, with the multitude of beggars which beset him everywhere—by the road-side, at the railway stations and hotels, and in and about the churches: their number is legion. Even in the happy valley of the Meuse, where agriculture and manufactures go hand in hand, the pedestrian may reckon, with tolerable certainty, upon being importuned for charity once in every two miles. In the Ardennes alone, which is by far the poorest part of Belgium, there are no mendicants. There are no rich: here and there a great square building, pierced with many windows, looking like a manufactory, and called a chateau, denotes a resident proprietor; but these are rare; and he is rich even for a baron in Ardennes who has a thousand pounds a-year. But then there are none absolutely destitute; all stand alike upon the same level of a real but uncomplaining poverty. During the last winter, when the potato crop failed all over Belgium, the Ardennes, which had suffered most severely, were the only part which did not petition the government for relief. Their cottages, built of stone, turf, and thatch, are small, but reasonably clean. Each cottage contains its Dutch clock assiduously ticking in a corner, its pewter and earthenware utensils, its wooden table and chairs, and ample wood fire, smouldering on a hearth of bricks. Rye-bread and potatoes form the staple of their food, with coffee when they can get it, and a little tobacco. The means of getting even this are wrung with difficulty from an inferior soil, which the want of capital and markets prevents from being cultivated to the best advantage.

As you walk along, small fields and little narrow strips of land of themselves denote the existence of a number of small proprietors. The agricultural system adopted is something like that of out-field and in-field once universal in Scotland; but the great resource of the peasantry, as in all upland countries, is pasturage, and the irrigation of their meadows is pursued by them with great assiduity and skill. At the time of the snow-melting, when the hill-sides are running with water, the overplus is distributed equally over the surface by a multiplicity of ditches and conduits, the level being regulated with great care. The reward of this labour is an abundance of coarse herbage, nourishing large herds of cattle, the sale of which in the border provinces of France is a chief source of subsistence. Many of the streams which feed this verdure are dried up during the fierce heats of summer; and a prairie or water-meadow, warranted to last through the year, fetches a very high price, considering the value of money. It is not probable that the state of things here described will continue much longer. Already a railway, planned by British engineers, and executed by British capital, is commenced through the district, to construct which thousands of acres will be dismantled of their timber. The consequent demand for labourers has already raised the labour-price one-half. The railway will bring lime, and lime will make fruitful corn-fields out of desolate heaths. The fine oaks and beeches, now rotting on the ground, or felled only for firewood, owing to a want of the means of transport, will then realise their value, and a general clearance will ensue. The squirrels will be dismounted; the few remaining wolves knocked on the head; the deer will vanish with the destruction of their covers, or survive only in

parks; the sights, sounds, thoughts, and feelings of pleasant but unprogressive woodland life, will give way to the features and habits of a thriving and well-peopled country; and a few venerable trunks, preserved by accident or taste, will alone mark the site of the perished Forest of Arden.

### BREAD UPON THE WATERS.

We are all aware of the importance of water in the aliment of plants; but in some parts of the world vegetable food is grown in lakes and rivers, just as here it is cultivated in fields. The closest approach we make to this is in our plantations of water-cresses; but in the south of France and in Italy, as we proceed towards a higher latitude, the water-nut—a most important production, as we shall see—first appears in the market. The seeds of this plant, which grows in the water, consist of pure edible fecula, and are eaten raw, roasted, or in soups, and, from their taste, usually receive the name of water-chestnuts. In Venice they were formerly sold, we do not know why, as 'Jesuits' Nuts;' and Pliny's account of their being gathered by the dwellers on the Nile, is confirmed by some being still occasionally found in the folds of the mummy cloth.

In India the water-nut, which is there called Singara, is extensively grown, both for local consumption and transport, and is frequently carried on the backs of bullocks several hundred miles to market. The tanks where it is cultivated are laid out in *fields*, the limits of which are marked by tall bamboos, and the peasants pay for the holdings by the acre. These water-farmers conduct their operations by means of boats; planting, weeding, and gathering in their singara at the proper seasons, just as their brethren on land do with their wheat or barley. And a tank in India, be it remembered, is rarely a pond; it is often a considerable lake, and sometimes might present to an unaccustomed eye the appearance of an inland sea, with only the high land dimly visible beyond. In such cases the tanks are not excavations, but extensive valleys, dammed up at the lower end, so as to confine the waters of the district in one immense basin; and the steps which lead to them, instead of being formed of hewn stone, as in smaller works of the kind, are the declivities of granite mountains. In southern India these vast reservoirs are, in some instances, more than twenty miles in circumference; and we are told of embanked dams between the Indus and the Suliman mountains thirty miles long.

The singara lakes have sometimes proved a great blessing to the towns in their neighbourhood—for the water plants do not fail, like those of the land. Colonel Sleeman mentions a lake in Bundelcund which, by means of nuts and fish, preserved the lives of seven towns during a recent famine. This sheet of water was four miles long by two broad; but from the mountain-ridge forming one of its sides the traveller saw a still more extensive lake, which had answered a similar purpose on a larger scale. The ridge, dominated by the ruined palace of the Hindoo prince who constructed the tank, was composed of high and bare quartz hills, towering above all others, curling and foaming at the top like a wave ready to burst when suddenly arrested by the hand of Omnipotence.

The leaves of the plants float upon the surface of the water, and in the earlier part of the day present the appearance of a green field; but in the afternoon their pure white flowers expand, and peeping, opening, or bursting into beauty, give an agreeable variety to the picture. When the flowers decay, the nut, which is under the water, begins to ripen, and in September the harvest is ready. The white kernel is covered with a tough brown integument, and the whole is imbedded in a triangular shell. It is not fit for consumption for more than three months, when eaten *au naturel*; but it is likewise used in the form of meal, and will then keep for a considerable time.

In China the water-nut is extensively cultivated in lakes and ponds, but more especially in the shallower waters of the Imperial Canal. The sacred lotus, however, appears to be there more widely diffused; and not, with

so practical and prosaic a people, on account of its superior beauty, but more probably because the roots, as well as the seeds, are eatable. The seeds are described by Davis as resembling an acorn without the cup, and the roots as being white, juicy, and of a sweet and refreshing taste. Its 'tulip-like but gigantic blossoms, tinted with pink or yellow, hang over its broad peltated leaves;' and this gorgeous carpet is spread over immense fields of water.

Cashmere, however, must be considered as the country *par excellence* of the water-nut, since there a very considerable portion of the population live upon it alone. This region is embosomed in mountains, the culminating ridge which shuts it in from the rest of the world forming an oval figure one hundred and twenty miles long and seventy miles broad. The plain at the bottom, however, is estimated by Hugel at only seventy-five miles long and forty miles broad; the intermediate space being composed of the precipitous sides of the mountains, swelling out as they descend into green hills, that sink gracefully into the emerald sward of the plain. The summits are crowned with perpetual snow, and cataracts rush down their ravines; but, on approaching the vale, these torrents lose their fierceness, and roll in smooth streams, between undulating hills, till they reach the central waters. These are surrounded with perennial spring, and wander through groves and plains which the traveller Bernier concluded to have been actually the site of the Garden of Eden!

The waters are composed of the river Jailum, which wanders through the whole valley, now expanding into shallow lakes, one of which is twenty miles long and nine broad, and now rolling in a deep full stream, flanked by numerous small lakes and tarns. The excessive richness of the vegetation in this remarkable valley is not confined to the dry land; for every piece of water is mantled over either with nuts or lotus. In the Walur lake, sixty thousand tons of nuts are raised every year, and they are the sole subsistence of twenty thousand persons, who think it an almost intolerable calamity when driven to have recourse to any other kind of food. The superficial extent of this lake is a hundred square miles, by which some idea of its extraordinary productiveness may be formed, supporting as it does two hundred persons to the square mile.

The other waters are clothed with the more picturesque lotus, the seeds or beans of which are here eaten as a delicacy when they are unripe; and the leaf-stalks, when boiled till they are tender, are considered palatable and nutritious food. The flower and leaf of the lotus always floats; and for this reason, probably, the plant is regarded by the Hindoos as a mystic emblem of the preservation of the world during the deluge. In Cashmere, however, it has the more practical merit of supporting a considerable part of the population, although no author has attempted to estimate the amount of its produce. We may add, that the population fed upon such substances—including those who live upon the nuts alone—are described by all travellers as being models of strength, symmetry, and beauty.

The lotus appears to be likewise indigenous in America; and there the seeds, as in Cashmere, are eaten when green. We copy the following very remarkable picture from 'Flint's Geography and History of the Western States:—

'Among the flourishing aquatic plants, there is one that, for magnificence and beauty, stands unrivalled and alone. We have seen it on the middle and southern waters; but of the greatest size and splendour on the bayous and lakes of the Arkansas. It has different popular names. The upper Indians call it Panocco. We have seen it designated by botanists by the name *Nymphaea nelumbo*. It rises from a root resembling the large stump of a cabbage, and from depths in the water of two or three to ten feet. It has an elliptical, smooth, and verdant leaf, some of the largest being the size of a parasol. These muddy bayous and stagnant waters are often so covered with those leaves, that the sandpiper walks abroad on the surface without dipping her feet in the water. The flowers are enlarged copies of the *Nymphaea*



*oderata*, or New England pond-lily. They have a cup of the same elegant conformation, and all the brilliant white and yellow of that flower. They want the ambrosial fragrance of the pond-lily, and resemble in this respect, as they do in their size, the flowers of the laurel magnolia. On the whole, they are the largest and most beautiful flowers that we have seen. They have their home in dead lakes, in the centre of cypress swamps. Mosquitoes swarm above, obscene fowls wheel their flight over them, alligators swim above their roots, and moccasin snakes bask on their leaves. In such lonely and repulsive situations, under such circumstances, and for such spectators, is arrayed the most gaudy and brilliant display of flowers in the creation. In the capsule are imbedded from four to six acorn-shaped seeds, which the Indians roast and eat when green; or they are dried, and eaten as nuts; or are pulverised into meal, and form a kind of bread.

The *Victoria Regina*, found by Mr Schomburgk in the river Berbio, slightly differs from the nymphs botanically. He describes it as 'a vegetable wonder—a gigantic leaf from five to six feet in diameter, salver-shaped, with a broad rim of a light-green above, and a vivid crimson below, resting on the water. Quite in character with the wonderful leaf was the luxuriant flower, consisting of many hundred petals, passing in alternate tints from pure white to rose and pink. The smooth water was covered with the blossoms; and as I rowed from one to the other, I always found something to admire.'

Among the plants cultivated in water for the food of man may be included rice; although this grows not in lakes or rivers, but in small dams, as the fields may be termed. Rice is likewise different from the other productions we have mentioned, inasmuch as the plants live, though they do not thrive, in dry ground. In this case, however, the produce is rarely a tenth part of a full crop; to obtain which, not only irrigation, but entire submersion is necessary. In India the rice-fields are frequently under water, even when they are ploughed; and thus the operation, as Tennant observes, more nearly resembles that of a pouter in preparing and setting his clay, than the cultivation of a field. The plants, however, are first brought to a certain height in a separate bed, and then transplanted into the water; which is done by fixing a ball of clay to the roots of two or three stalks, and dropping the whole into the pond. This explains a passage in Ecclesiastes, more frequently quoted than understood—'Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days;' which means that, in the ordinary providence of God, we shall enjoy the reward of a good work in due season. We have but to plant; and the sun, the winds, and the waters—the ministers of a higher Power—whose operations we cannot comprehend, will bring the seed to perfection.

In China, Captain Hamilton observed the cultivators sailing among their crops in boats; and Medhurst tells us that, from the preparing of the ground for the seed, almost to the reaping of the harvest, the rice-fields must be overspread with water. For this purpose each field or shallow pond has an elevated ridge or border, with a stream continually flowing in; a precaution requisite to provide against waste by evaporation, as well as to insure a supply from the surplus to the lower grounds. The water is either raised by artificial means—such as pumps, levers, wheels, &c.—from a lower to a higher region, or conducted, with great skill and care, from some elevated position along the sides of hills, and across valleys, to the desired spot; where, introduced into the highest field of the series, it gradually flows down to the lower terraces, until it is lost in the river or the sea. Crawford notices the same practice in some parts of the Indian Archipelago, and adds that, when ripe, this most beautiful of all cereal crops, then of a rich golden colour, waving in tall masses, terrace above terrace, gives an inexpressible magnificence to the landscape.

The necessity for a copious supply of water in the cultivation of rice is one principal cause of the famines which from time to time have desolated India. There

the abundance or scantiness of the rains during the wet season is a question of life and death to tens of thousands. The wells and tanks are at such times of little use for irrigation, as the bullocks die for lack of provender; and the grain perishes, partly from the drought, and partly from want of cultivation. In this position each inland district is shut up in its own misery; for, generally speaking, there are no roads by which to bring relief, and no money, if there were roads, to purchase it. The people die in thousands without a murmur, for they recognise in the cause of the famine the finger of Providence; ignorant, from ages of misrule, of the awful responsibility which weighs upon their rulers. The roads swarm with fugitives from the land of famine, travelling sick, faint, and weary, in search of food. In the villages, as they pass, the mothers offer their babes to strangers, but the strangers are as destitute as themselves. Some lie down by the wayside, and the highway is strewn with their corpses; while others crawl into gardens and ruins, to die in silence and alone. The less hopeful never leave their famine-stricken hamlet at all; but, ashamed to go forth for the purpose of begging, take opium—husband, wife, and children—and expire in each others' arms.

In such awful cases, the lakes and tanks at least diminish the misery they cannot remove. The water-nut supports its thousands; and the sacred lotus realises the dream of the Brahmin—being not only an emblem, but a means, of the preservation of human life till the angel of destruction has passed by.

#### FACTS FROM GWEEDORE.

IN the county of Donegal, on the north-west coast of Ireland, is situated a wild mountain district called Gweedore, about which a pamphlet of a remarkable nature, from the pen of Lord George Hill, has lately made its appearance.\* The object of the publication is to satisfy a reasonable curiosity which has been expressed by his lordship's friends respecting a somewhat Quixotic attempt to improve an estate, or, more correctly speaking, to reclaim from worse than a state of nature a tract of country of which he had become the purchaser. The noble author's production boasts none of the graces of polite literature; it is little else than a series of facts treated plainly and statistically; but on that account we like it all the better. Practical and to the point, it demonstrates, in language not to be misunderstood, what a new world Ireland might become were its landowners resolutely to address themselves to the task of improvement. The account of Lord George Hill's efforts, however, may be inspiring in other quarters; and as his 'Facts from Gweedore' have as yet attracted little attention from the press, we propose to give them as wide a publicity as may be possible through the medium of these pages. It will be necessary, in the first place, to describe the condition of Gweedore previous to its change of owners.

Gweedore, which forms part of the parish of Tullaghobeg, extends to twenty-three thousand acres of mountain-grazing and arable land. Up to 1838, it belonged to a number of proprietors, none of whom resided in the district. The population of the parish amounted to about nine thousand individuals, of whom a third were located in Gweedore. The Irish language was universally spoken, and comparatively few knew English. There does not appear to have been any clergyman of the established church within the district. The people were all Roman Catholics, and had a chapel and a priest. Besides this gentleman there was a schoolmaster, on miserable pay, who taught a few pupils; likewise a coast-guard and constabulary force. And here may be said to conclude the list of individuals above the condition of an ignorant, wretched, and lawless peasantry. Grazing of cattle and sheep, the cultiva-

\* Facts from Gweedore; compiled from Notes, by Lord George Hill. Dublin: Philip Dixon Hardy and Sons, London: Hatchard and Sons, Piccadilly. 1846. An 8vo. pamphlet, with cuts and map.



tion of patches of land, fishing at certain seasons, and the illicit distillation of whisky, formed the means of general subsistence. Everything was on the rudest possible scale. There were no handicrafts, no inns, no shops; articles were purchased at a dear rate from hawkers, and the produce of the district could be disposed of only at fairs or in distant towns. The state of the roads was also deplorable. 'Even in the year 1837, when the lord-lieutenant made his tour through those parts of Donegal, the leading road was so broken up and intercepted by boggy sloughs (though in the middle of summer), that his excellency might not have been able to proceed along part of it, had it not been for the ingenuity of a country fellow, who, observing the difficulty, with all the quickness and spirit of a rustic Raleigh ran to his cabin, whipt off the door, and hurrying to his excellency's relief, laid it down before his horse's feet; by this device his lordship and staff were enabled to proceed in comfort. As soon as they had passed, the man immediately hoisted the door on his shoulders, tripped on merrily before his excellency, until he saw it necessary to lower it again; and thus he accompanied the cavalcade, being, perhaps, not the least useful attaché to the suite.'

In the same year in which the lord-lieutenant paid a visit to Donegal, a memorial was presented to his excellency by Patrick McKye, teacher in the parish, showing the general state of affairs. We transcribe it as a curiosity.

'Humbly sheweth—That the parishioners of this parish of West Tullaghobeghy, in the barony of Kilmacrennan, and county of Donegal, are in the most needy, hungry, and naked condition of any people that ever came within the precincts of my knowledge, although I have travelled a part of nine counties in Ireland, also a part of England and Scotland, together with a part of British America; I have likewise perambulated 2253 miles through seven of the United States, and never witnessed the tenth part of such hunger, hardships, and nakedness.

'Now, my lord, if the causes which I now lay before your excellency were not of very extraordinary importance, I would never presume that it should be laid before you. But I consider myself in duty bound by charity to relieve distressed and hungry fellow-men; although I am sorry to state that my charity cannot extend farther than to explain to the rich where hunger and hardships exists, in almost in the greatest degree that nature can endure. And which I shall endeavour to explain in detail, with all the truth and accuracy in my power, and that without the least exaggeration, as follows:—All within the parish [9049 in 1841] are as poor as I shall describe them. They have among them no more than one cart, no wheel car, no coach or any other wheeled vehicle, one plough, sixteen harrows, eight saddles, two pillions, eleven bridles, twenty shovels, thirty-two rakes, seven table-forks, ninety-three chairs, two hundred and forty-three stools, ten iron grapes, no swine, hogs, or pigs, twenty-seven geese, three turkeys, two feather beds, eight chaff beds, two stables, six cow-houses, one national school, no other school, one priest, no other resident gentleman, no bonnet, no clock, three watches, eight brass candlesticks, no looking-glasses above threepence in price, no boots, no spurs, no fruit-trees, no turnips, no parsnips, no carrots, no clover or any other garden vegetables, but potatoes and cabbage, and not more than ten square feet of glass in windows in the whole, with the exception of the chapel, the school-house, the priest's house, Mr Dombrian's house, and the constabulary barrack.

'None of their either married or unmarried women can afford more than one shift, and a few cannot afford any; more than one-half of both men and women cannot afford shoes to their feet, nor can many of them afford a second bed, but whole families of sons and daughters of mature age indiscriminately lying together with their parents.

'They have no means of harrowing their land but with meadow rakes. Their farms are so small, that

from four to ten farms can be harrowed in a day with one rake.

'Their beds are straw—green and dried rushes or mountain bent: their bedclothes are either coarse sheets, or no sheets, and ragged filthy blankets.

'And, worse than all that I have mentioned, there is a general prospect of starvation at the present prevailing among them, and that originating from various causes; but the principal cause is a rot or failure of seed in the last year's crop, together with a scarcity of winter forage, in consequence of a long continuation of storm since October last in this part of the country.

'So that they, the people, were under the necessity of cutting down their potatoes and give them to their cattle to keep them alive. All these circumstances connected together, has brought hunger to reign among them to that degree that the generality of the peasantry are on the small allowance of one meal a-day, and many families cannot afford more than one meal in two days, and sometimes one meal in three days.

'Their children crying and fainting with hunger, and their parents weeping, being full of grief, hunger, debility, and dejection, with glooming aspect, looking at their children likely to expire in the jaws of starvation. Also, in addition to all, their cattle and sheep are dying with hunger, and their owners forced by hunger to eat the flesh of such.

'Tis reasonable to suppose that the use of such flesh will raise some infectious disease among the people, and may very reasonably be supposed that the people will die more numerous than the cattle and sheep, if some immediate relief are not sent to alleviate their hunger.

'Now, my lord, it may perhaps seem inconsistent with truth that all that I have said could possibly be true; but if any unprejudiced gentleman should be sent here to investigate my report, I will, if called on, go with him from house to house, where his eyes will fully satisfy and convince him, and where I can show him about one hundred and forty children bare-naked, and was so during winter, and some hundreds only covered with filthy rags, most disgusting to look at. Also man and beast housed together; that is, the families in one end of the house, and the cattle in the other. Some houses having within their walls from one to thirty hundredweights of dung, others having from ten to fifteen tons weight of dung, and only cleaned out once a-year!

'I have also to add, that the national school has greatly decreased in number of scholars, through hunger and extreme poverty; and the teacher of said school, with a family of nine persons, depending on a salary of £8 a-year, without any benefit from any other source. If I may hyperbolically speak, it is an honour for the Board of Education!

It would be scarcely possible to imagine a state of things more deplorable than is here represented; and it will appear surprising how such abject destitution should have occurred at all. This involves an interesting point in political economy; affording a striking picture of the abyss into which a people may sink by following a wrong social and industrial system. It may be said that affairs could not have sunk into so lamentable a condition had the landowners resided on their properties; but at the same time it would be too much to impute blame exclusively to absenteeism. The landlords drew comparatively little money from their properties. The rents were small, and ill paid. Arrears frequently accumulated for years; bailiffs were afraid to execute writs within the district; and often no rents were paid at all. Practically, the land was held in permanence by the tenants. There was no getting them out of it. They appropriated and used, divided and subdivided, mortgaged and bequeathed their farms just as if they had been their own property. In the course of time, accordingly, the whole district was cut up into patches, and had got into a numerous variety of hands, altogether different from those

acknowledged by the lawful owner. As an instance of this species of subdivision and transfer, one field of about half an acre was held by twenty-six persons. 'The farms were also frequently, at the death of parents, reduced to atoms at once; being then divided among all the children: in such cases, when the farm was small, it left to each a mere shred, and by this simple process the next generation were beggars.' The whole district, therefore, was as nearly as possible an arbitrary appropriation by its inhabitants; and yet these people, in doing what they liked, were plunged into a state of poverty the most appalling the imagination can conceive. Those who entertain the theory that capitalists are monsters of rapacity, and that the world might be transformed into an earthly paradise by giving every man his acre, will do well to ponder on this instructive fact.

The truth is, neither the landlords nor tenants were specially to blame. The error lay in a system which had been growing up for ages, and of which both parties were ultimately the victims. The practice of dividing and re-dividing the lands, to accommodate a poor and increasing population, was the proximate source of deterioration. We are told that in many instances farmers had patches of land in thirty to forty different places, without fences to separate them from other patches, or to keep out cattle; and it was a rule that such patches should be of different qualities—good, middling, and bad—in order that all might share alike. Disputes, fights, trespasses, and confusion were the natural consequences of this *Rundale* system, as it was called; and sometimes a poor man would abandon his inheritance of thirty shreds of ground, in utter despair of ever being able to make them out. Worse than all, 'on a certain day all the cattle of the township were brought from the mountains, and allowed to run indiscriminately over the arable land, and any that had not the potatoes dug, or other crops off the ground, were much injured; neither could any one man venture to grow turnips, clover, or other green crops, for nothing short of a seven-feet wall would keep out the mountain sheep.' In addition, there prevailed a practice of holding pieces of land in partnership, and the very animals were sometimes matter of division. 'In an adjacent island, three men were concerned in one horse; but the poor brute was rendered useless, as the unfortunate foot of the supernumerary leg remained unshod, none of them being willing to acknowledge its dependency, and accordingly it became quite lame. There were many intestine rows on the subject; at length one of the "company" came to the mainland, and called on a magistrate for advice, stating that the animal was entirely useless now; that he had not only kept up, decently, his proper hoof at his own expense, but had shod this fourth foot twice to boot! yet the other two proprietors resolutely refused to shoe more than *their own foot*!'

Here we may close the evidence as to the condition of Gweedore previous to 1838, in which year, and subsequently, the properties now composing the estate were purchased by Lord George Hill. We shall now see how his lordship set to work to remedy this state of affairs.

The acquisition and transference of land in Ireland is usually a matter of serious difficulty; any attempt to reorganise the tenancies being frequently visited by the assassination of the principal or his agents. Perhaps too little pains is taken on such occasions to explain matters to the people, or to commence in the right way. It does not appear that Lord George Hill was exposed to anything like indignity or outrage on taking possession of his property or remodelling the tenancies. Fearless of danger, he went with his agent to reside on the spot, central to the operations which he intended to pursue. His object was to become personally acquainted with his tenantry, and so obtain an insight into their condition and character. For this purpose, on establishing himself at Gweedore, he visited every house in the

district, and entered into conversation with its inmates in their own tongue, which he fortunately was able to speak. The intercourse so established was pleasing and attractive to the people, who had never before heard the language of sympathy from a superior; and they asserted that their new landlord 'could not be a lord at all, particularly as he spoke Irish.'

The first thing done was to induce the abandonment of illicit distillation, which caused ruinous habits, poverty, and social disorder, and likewise occasional famines, by consuming the grain which should otherwise have been made into food. It was of no use, however, attempting to preach down this evil. The plan consisted in opening up a market for the disposal of grain at a fair price, payable in ready money. 'In 1839, a corn store, eighty-four feet long by twenty-two feet wide, having three lofts and a kiln, was built at the port of Bunbeg, capable of containing three or four hundred tons of oats. A quay was formed in front of the store, at which vessels of two hundred tons can load or discharge, there being fourteen feet of water at the height of the tide. A market was thus established for the grain of the district, the price given for it being much the same as at Letterkenny, six-and-twenty miles distant. There was much difficulty in getting this store built; even the site of it had to be excavated, by blasting from the solid rock, and there were no masons or carpenters in the country capable of erecting a building of the kind. So great was the difficulty of getting even a coffin made, that to secure the services of a carpenter, such as the district afforded, many of the people gave him annually, by way of a retaining fee, sheaves of oats, on the express condition of making their coffin when they died! It was therefore found necessary to introduce competent tradesmen; and even then much manoeuvring was requisite to get those who were brought for the purpose to remain. They were paid regularly every Saturday night; but it was by no means unusual, on mustering the hands on Monday morning, to have it reported that a carpenter or mason had deserted in the interval; and it was no wonder! The aspect of the country being so prodigiously different from anything they had ever seen, and the comforts they had been accustomed to, such as bread and meat, not for any consideration to be procured, there being neither baker nor butcher nearer than a day's journey!'

The store acted like a charm. In the first year of its operations the sum of £479, 9s. 6½d. was paid for oats; and for the year 1844 the amount was £1100. Grain, butter, hides, and wool were also purchased; the whole being shipped for Liverpool; and between that port and Bunbeg a trade accordingly sprung up. Much as the money payments for oats were prized, they were of comparatively little use, in consequence of there being no means of laying them out to advantage. Lord George Hill, as a capitalist, again interposed to do that which no one else had the means to undertake. He established a wheelwright, to make carts and wheelbarrows; and opened a shop, at which iron, wood, salt, soap, candles, sugar, tea, and a few other articles were sold at the Letterkenny prices. The wheelwright, under the superintendence of the agent, acted as shopkeeper; but its noble owner put up a signboard with his own name over the door, expressing in Irish that he was licensed to sell tea, tobacco, and other excisable articles. Every year the business of the shop increased. The first quarter's sales to December 1840 amounted to £40, 12s. 10d., whilst the corresponding quarter for 1844 was £550. So many new articles are now added to the stock, that the shop embraces pretty nearly everything in groceries, crockery, hardware, drapery, and stationery; also some few drugs, and articles of confectionary and dysaltery. The concern having gone much beyond the powers of management of the wheelwright, has been put under the charge of an experienced person, with several assistants. His lordship also erected a mill for grinding wheat, and a bakery for making bread and biscuit; and of these articles, as also

of flour, a large sale ensued, in consequence of the improved habits and circumstances of the inhabitants. The whole transactions in buying and selling are in ready cash.

Soon after the establishment of the store, Lord George Hill began his endeavours to regulate the territorial arrangements. All the old and complex holdings were to be abolished; instead of having his land in disjointed scraps, every man was assured of getting a just proportion, according to his rent, in a single piece. The tenants were all assembled to hear the new measures proposed; and although they advanced innumerable objections, they peaceably consented to allow the allotments to be made; a degree of confidence being inspired in their minds, by being allowed to appoint a committee of themselves to assist in laying out the new farms. When all had been surveyed and laid out, the farms were distributed with the greatest regard to existing interests, and also by casting lots in cases of competing claims. 'It took about three years to accomplish the divisions, as upwards of twenty thousand acres had to be thus arranged and distributed. Altogether, it was a difficult task, and much thwarted by the people, as they naturally did not like that their old ways should be disturbed or interfered with, nor were they disposed as yet to abandon the Rundale system. They did not seem to have a *taste* for simple plain-dealing, or that matters should be put straight, and made easy of apprehension. The greater part of the tenants had to remove their houses, formerly in small clusters, to their new farms. This, though troublesome to them, was not a very expensive affair; as the custom on such occasions is for the person who has the work to be done to hire a fiddler, upon which *engagement* all the neighbours joyously assemble, and carry, in an incredibly short time, the stones and timber upon their backs to the new site: men, women, and children alternately dancing and working while daylight lasts, at the termination of which they adjourn to some dwelling, where they finish the night, often prolonging the dance to dawn of day, and with little other entertainment but that which a fiddler or two affords.'

The only arrangement to which the people made any violent opposition was the fencing of a few ten-acre farms on the waste land. Nothing would induce them to construct the fences, though good payment was offered; and when strangers were employed in the work, they molested them, and pulled down at night what was erected during the day. An energetic display of police force at length quelled this turbulence, and the fences were permitted to stand. The evident improvement in the condition of those tenants who had first got their allotments, helped considerably to allay discontent; and in time the people became absolutely pressing to have land allotted to them in the same manner. When the arrangements were completed, the whole district formed a well-organised system of farms varying in size, each with a cottage attached, and approachable by roads made chiefly at the expense of the proprietor. And as the store carried off the produce, so did the shop furnish the cottages with crockery, pans, bedding, and other articles necessary for domestic comfort.

In order to inspire a taste for neatness and habits of industry, Lord George Hill offered premiums to all who chose to compete in improvements in agriculture, draining, fencing, green crops, breeds of cattle and pigs; also for neat cottages with chimneys, plastered and whitewashed; making butter, weaving woollens, knitting, &c. 'The first year not a single individual could be induced to compete for the premiums, the people thinking it all a hoax, being convinced in their minds that no gentleman would be so great a fool as to give his money merely to benefit others. No doubt they considered themselves very knowing in not being taken in. In 1840, the tenants observing that any promise made to them was strictly fulfilled, acquired confidence, and some thought they might at all events try the

thing. That year, therefore, there were thirty-six competitors for the premiums, which amounted to L.40, 1s. 6d.; and were so fairly awarded by the judges, that they caused general satisfaction.' Every year the number of competitors increased. In 1844 they amounted to two hundred and thirty-nine, to whom L.60 was paid.

Some things were still wanting. The district had no hotel. Here the noble proprietor once more acted nobly: he erected a handsome and commodious hotel at Gweedore, where travellers could be accommodated with lodgings, horses, and cars. Subsequently, a convenient session-house, and an airy and commodious schoolhouse, were erected, and put in operation. To the school a mistress was attached, to teach the girls sewing. In the schoolhouse, on Sundays, divine service is performed by a minister of the established church. Along with other improvements, illicit distillation and intemperance disappeared. Formerly, it was the custom at weddings for each friend or relation of the bride and bridegroom to bring a bottle of whisky: now, this is gone, and each deposits a loaf, or some other simple article of refreshment. With respect to advancement in economic arrangements, the following passages occur in a report by the gentlemen who adjudged the premiums in 1843:—

'We have found a considerable extent of new ground, reclaimed from bog and mountain, bearing good crops of oats and potatoes, and in many places the tenants already attempting the cultivation of green crops, by raising turnips, the value of which, as it becomes more generally known, will no doubt induce numbers of others to follow their example.

'We have to express our satisfaction at the evident improvement in the mode of reclaiming and cultivating the boggy and mountain lands, by draining and spade husbandry, and at the judicious manner in which, under the guidance of his lordship's agriculturist, the exertions of the people are directed, and their time and labour turned to the best account.

'We are also happy to find so much attention given to the home manufacture of woollens, the quality of the cloth of various kinds, and the flannel, stockings, &c. exhibited being most creditable. This branch of industry is, we conceive, particularly valuable, as it gives that employment to the females for which they are peculiarly fitted, and enables them to contribute, in no small degree, to the health and comfort of their families—affording cheap and warm clothing, and inculcating a spirit of exertion among them.

'In nothing, however, have we had such pleasure as in the marked improvement in the dwelling and office houses of the tenants, knowing what difficulties old habits and prejudices present to such changes. Until lately, the people were crowded together in miserable villages, where want of cleanliness, and the impure exhalations of dung-pits close to their dwelling-houses, generated disease and misery. Now we behold in all directions neat and comfortable cottages, attracting the eye by their well-thatched roofs and whitewashed walls, giving an aspect of life, health, and cheerfulness. Nor were we disappointed upon a closer inspection: we found that the interior of the houses fully realised the expectations raised by their exterior appearance—clean, orderly, and well-ventilated rooms, comfortable and suitable beds and bedsteads, with a supply of bedclothing and furniture equal at least to the wants of the inmates, and in many instances showing a taste in the arrangement for which we were quite unprepared.

'These various improvements we consider in a great measure attributable to the division of the lands into separate farms, and placing each tenant's house upon his own ground; one of the great advantages of which is, enabling them to place their dwellings, offices, and manure heaps in the most convenient situations for comfort and cleanliness—advantages of which, it is but justice to the tenants to say, they have fully availed themselves.



'It was peculiarly gratifying to us to witness the respectable appearance and orderly demeanour of the crowds of persons assembled upon this occasion, and the gratitude displayed in the looks and manner, even more than by the expressions, of the successful candidates, when, after the dinner provided for them by his lordship, and his agent had announced the decision of the judges, they approached his lordship and received from his hands the amount of the prizes respectively awarded them.'

We learn by a foot-note that on the above occasion Lord George Hill not only provided dinner for, but dined with his tenants. This was an honour altogether overwhelming. 'The poor people could not believe that they would be permitted to dine with his lordship! When assembled outside the house where the dinner was provided, seeing the surveyor, whom they knew, at the door, they anxiously inquired of him "if it was really true that they might go in?"'

Here may appropriately conclude this gratifying and 'eventful history.' A nobleman, abandoning the frivolities of the metropolis, has been seen expending his wealth and his energies on the reclamation of one of the least hopeful tracts of country in the British islands. By dint of benevolence, intelligence, and perseverance, he is successful. Lawless resistance to authority is suppressed—without firing a shot. Poverty is turned into prosperity, intemperance into sobriety, vice into virtue, ignorance into knowledge. While thus benefiting others, we trust that Lord George Hill has equally improved his own fortune by the hazardous enterprise which he undertook, and so courageously brought to an issue. As a lesson to Irish landlords, his example is invaluable, more particularly as his improvements have been carried out at his own cost and risk. Will this example be lost on those who are everlastingly seeking to have *something done for them*, instead of *doing for themselves*?

### THE MANTLE OF LOVE.

'Love covereth all sins.'

—Proverbs, x. 11.

'I WISH, mamma, that you would buy me a satin mantle like that which Caroline Morrison had on to-day,' exclaimed Emily Thornley, looking up anxiously into her mother's face as she spoke. 'Did you not remark how elegant it was, and how beautifully it was trimmed with gimp and fringe?' she added, finding her parent did not reply.

To own the truth, I took no notice of Miss Morrison's dress; my thoughts were too much engrossed by the conversation I was holding with her mother. Mrs Thornley made answer. 'Perhaps, Emily,' she continued a little reproachfully, 'you were so taken up with your admiration of the mantle, that you did not listen to it: was it so?' Emily blushed, and hung down her head. 'I feared as much,' the lady resumed. 'Now, my dear, I must say that I think you would have been better employed in listening to Mrs Morrison's account of the good effected by the Infant School she has opened for the poor of the village, than observing either the texture or the trimmings of a mantle.'

'Oh, now you remind me, mamma, I do remember all about it; but I was thinking just now how much I should like to have such a mantle, and I forgot for the moment.'

'This is a proof that such frivolous things occupy your thoughts to the exclusion of subjects of utility.'

'No, mamma; one must think of one's dress sometimes; and you know that you were so kind as to say that you would take me with you to town to-morrow for the purpose of buying something of the kind for the autumn.'

'I did, my dear; and I do not intend to disappoint you of a suitable dress for the season: but you must remember that Mr Morrison is more wealthy than your papa, and can afford more expensive dress for his daughters.'

'Oh, I don't think Mr Morrison is very rich, mamma, though Caroline and Georgina always hold their heads up higher than any one else,' Emily interposed. 'Caroline would scarcely notice me to-day, because I was not so smart as she was; and so I should very much like to have such a mantle, if it were only just to show her and her

sister that you *can* afford to dress me as well as their papa and mamma can dress them.'

'That is an unworthy motive, Emily; and you certainly do not advance your own interest by such a plea,' Mrs Thornley observed. 'I was sorry to find that your thoughts were so much taken up by a trifle, that you could feel no interest in the benevolent cause which formed the subject of conversation; but I am still more grieved to discover that the wish to rival your friend was stronger than your admiration of the article in question.'

'Well, mamma, but everybody says how proud the Misses Morrison are.'

'I never observed it; and I am of opinion that your everybody consists of some few envious girls, who, like yourself, Emily, have the desire, without the means, of making a similar appearance.'

'Oh no; indeed I do assure you it is so, mamma.'

'Well, we will not dispute the matter, my dear; but I should much like to see you possessed of a mantle which would become you better than the one Miss Morrison had on to-day.'

'You mean something plainer and more durable, mamma?'

'I mean something more durable, Emily; but one which would be at the same time more beautiful.'

The little girl looked astonished. 'What *can* be more beautiful than that richly-figured satin?' she interposed.

'The mantle I refer to,' the mother resumed, 'would make you appear more attractive than the richest satin could do; and it would at the same time afford you more pleasure than the ungenuous and unamiable gratification of competing with your friend. I allude to the Mantle of Charity, or Love.' Emily looked disconcerted. 'This mantle,' continued Mrs Thornley, 'would lead you to remark the estimable qualities of those around you, rather than their failings; and as it is much more gratifying to the feelings to contemplate that which excites our admiration, than those actions which arouse resentment or indignation, you would yourself be the gainer by it.'

'But we cannot avoid seeing people's faults when they are so very obvious,' Emily interposed.

'They may not be so obvious to one who is not pre-determined to observe them; of which a convincing proof has this morning been given. I saw not the slightest indication of pride in Miss Morrison's demeanour; but, on the contrary, observed with great pleasure the lively interest she evidently takes in the plans of benevolence her parents are executing. It is most probable that this circumstance was the real occasion of her seemingly distant manner towards yourself. Thus you see, my dear girl, I who was looking for her good qualities, readily discerned them; whilst you, having your thoughts full of envy, not only failed to see what was truly estimable, but committed an act of positive injustice, by putting an unfavourable construction on the motives which actuated her conduct. Now, which think you derived the most pleasure from Miss Morrison's presence—I who was admiring, or you who were condemning?'

Emily answered by a flood of penitential tears.

'Let this be a lesson to you, my child, not to be too hasty in your censures,' the mother resumed; 'for where you are not capable of forming a correct judgment of the motives or actions of others, it is better to err on the side of charity, by which means you avoid wronging your fellow-creatures, and at the same time afford yourself a gratification for which no malevolent feelings can compensate.'

### RICH AND POOR.

The envy and hatred with which the hard-working poor contemplate their more fortunate neighbours, would be much mitigated, and perhaps altogether extinguished, if they could be brought to reflect that, in a commercial country such as England, opulence and indigence are, in a majority of cases, the direct results and representatives of poverty and industry. For what does any man toil except to purchase an exemption from toil? What is the stimulus and support of a poor man? The hope of becoming rich. If the Hindoo system of castes prevailed among us—if the humble man, however gifted, could never expect to emerge from his obscurity, he might justly complain of his lot; but in no country is the road to distinction more unobstructedly open to all classes than in England. The fathers and

grandfathers of some of our wealthiest gentry, and of the most eminent of our living statesmen, have been mechanics and artisans. From the nature of things, these grand prizes in the lottery of life can be only gained by a few; but if every man has a chance, it is as much as he has any right to expect. All poor men try to get rich; and it is no injustice to the many that only a few succeed. Drudgery and dependence are doubtless evils; but it is a great mistake to suppose that opulence is always a good.—*New Monthly Magazine.*

## A GOOD TRUTH WELL STATED.

We regard man as a progressive being, and capable of being lifted by moral and intellectual culture to a far higher position in the scale of being than he has yet occupied. Classes and communities may be rough and rugged, and even reckless, but they are capable of improvement—they have heads to think, and hearts to feel. They can be reached by kindness, and are soon able to distinguish between the man who courts merely to make tools of them to serve his own personal or political purposes, and the man who seeks, from no self-interested view whatever, not to court, but to counsel them, and to tell them the truth in love—though the truth he tells may be frequently disagreeable for them to hear.—*Airdrie Advertiser* (a new monthly paper).

## FLUENT SPEAKERS.

I have heard of some whose boast it is that, on any given topic, they can speak for any given time; even as Lucilius used, standing on one foot, to make two hundred verses, quality being, in either case, 'no object.' I have asked to what use is this power applied, and I have been told of some 'neat and appropriate' after-dinner advocacy of a patriotic and popular sentiment, amidst much jingling of flatteries and great applause; or of some pathetic exposition in a debating club of the wrongs of the Scottish Mary, and the cruelty of her decapitation. I have listened to such, and if they were fair specimens of their class, there have been much well-considered gesticulation, much not unpleasing play of countenance and modulation of voice, 'periods well turned,' and 'points well made;' but no earnestness, no sincerity, no soul. The words rang hollow; they seemed to come from, rather than from out, the speaker; from the 'outer wall of the teeth,' not from the citadel of the heart. They were a reflection not of the speaker's thoughts, but of what he thought that the hearers thought his thoughts should be. And when the exhibition was over, there was left no distinct or strong impression; no lesson had been taught, but (most unconsciously) that of the worthlessness of words, when they are only the ornamental cenotaphs of thought. To persons of this class the abolition of some good stock grievance, if they meddle with such, is a sad calamity; it narrows their vocation, and puts them on 'short time.' But, generally, it is only against obsolete oppressions that they wax indignant; it is only for widely-admitted utilities that they contend. Applause, the breath of other men's nostrils, by which they live, would be more scarce, if they could not denounce or plead without offence to any. To all such let there, in every sense, be peace!—*Dr W. B. Hodgson's Address to the Mental Improvement Society of the Liverpool Mechanics' Institution.*

## SONNET,

ON HEARING THE CLOCK STRIKE AT MIDNIGHT ON THE  
31ST DECEMBER.

BY LEITCH RITCHIE.

HARK! In that dirge-like peal what magic lies  
To move me thus? Unwilling thoughts that come,  
Like long-laid ghosts from some forgotten tomb,  
Tell me what potent spell hath said, Arise!  
Yet stay awhile, ye dreams that my young eyes  
Once loved to rest on; linger smiles, and tears  
Far sweeter: but the shadow of lost years,  
Mingling with darker clouds, already flies.

So, when a few faint notes of distant song  
Pass o'er the heart of some lone traveller,  
Like sounds he once had loved, the echoes there  
Are straight awakened, that the tones prolong  
One busy moment: soon 'tis heard no more,  
And the cold heart is silent as before.

## FIFTEEN YEARS AGO.

FIFTEEN years have now elapsed since the commencement of our literary labours. The present number of the Journal is the beginning of our sixteenth year. Fifteen years are a considerable section of time, and witness many changes which, however inadequately appreciated as they occur, assume a degree of importance in the retrospect. We may be said to have seen two generations change their character. Those who, fifteen years ago, were babies dandled in the nurse's arms, are now young men and women about to enter into active life; those who were boys, are now men; lads just emerging from school and college, are now grave papas of thirty years and upwards; misses with red shoes are no longer romps, but mothers of families, engaged in the high consideration of finishing establishments for daughters and professions for sons. Our sheet is now read by the children of those who were children when we entered on our career. By many our paper must be looked upon as a prodigiously old concern: they will profess having seen it as long as they can remember. 'I have read you ever since I was a boy,' said a gentleman of portly bearing to us one day. The lapse of time had never before been presented so palpably to the eye. We began forthwith to consider ourselves as somewhat aged persons.

And yet the progress of years is felt by us in no other way than in the consciousness of an increased desire to work out the purposes for which the present work was established. It is now so long since we told what these purposes were, that many who have not followed us from the commencement are apt to form incorrect impressions on the subject, and to recommend plans inconsistent with our principles of management. In the Editor's address to his readers (February 4, 1832), it was intimated that the object of the publication was to 'take advantage of the universal appetite for instruction which at present exists; to supply to that appetite food of the best kind, and in such a form, and at such a price, as must suit the convenience of every man in the British dominions. Every Saturday, when the labourer draws his humble earnings, he shall have it in his power to purchase, with an insignificant portion of even that humble sum, a meal of healthful, useful, and agreeable mental instruction: nay, every schoolboy shall be able to purchase, with his pocket-money, something permanently useful—something calculated to influence his fate through life—instead of the trash upon which the grown children of the present day were wont to expend it. The scheme of diffusing knowledge has certainly more than once been attempted on respectable principles, by associations established under all the advantages of an extensive capital, as well as the influence of baronial title, and the endeavour has generally been attended with beneficial results. Yet the great end has not been gained. The dearth of the publications, the harshness of official authority, and, above all, the method of attaching the interests of political or ecclesiastical corporations to the course of instruction or reading, have, separately or conjunctly, circumscribed the limits of their operation; so that the world, on the whole, is but little the wiser for all the attempts which have in this manner been made. The strongholds of ignorance, though not unassailed, remain still to be carried. Carefully eschewing the errors into which these praiseworthy associations have unfortunately fallen, I take a course altogether novel. Whatever may be my political principles—and I would not be in the least degree ashamed to own and defend them—neither these principles, nor any other, which would assuredly be destructive to my present views, shall ever mingle in my observations on the conventional arrangements of civil society. Nothing could afford me more unmitigated pleasure than to learn that CHAMBERS'S EDINBURGH JOURNAL yielded equal edification and delight to the highest conservative party in the state, and to the boldest advocate of a universal democracy; or was

read with as much avidity at the cheerless firesides of the Irish Roman Catholic peasantry, as at those of the more highly cultivated Presbyterian cottars of my native land.\*

This frank avowal that our paper was to be addressed to all; that it should, as far as possible, avoid topics and allusions of a controversial nature, met with general sympathy and approbation; and it seems scarcely necessary to explain that, by adhering to these maxims throughout, while keeping at the same time ahead in questions of social economy, the work has attained its well-known large circulation, and has survived amidst the wreck of numerous competitors.

With these good results before us, it would surely be highly unwise now to alter our plans, in order to please the fancies of any sect, party, or individual. It is our firm conviction that any attempt to do so would be attended by failure. The many would be lost for the sake of the few who would be gained, and the work would soon dwindle into deserved insignificance. So much we say in all friendliness to those who seem inclined to fasten upon us functions for which we have no vocation. No, no; we must decline usurping the mission of the politician and the divine; we must leave the newspaper and the evangelical magazine to follow out their respective aims. To us, be it enough that we hold by the original charter of our constitution. CHAMBERS'S EDINBURGH JOURNAL shall never be written for this or that country, or to meet this or that fashion of opinion, but remain to the end what it has been from the beginning—a LITERARY MISCELLANY, aspiring to inculcate the highest order of morals, universal brotherhood, and charity; to present exalted views of Creative Wisdom and Providential Care; and to impart correct, or at all events earnest and carefully formed, ideas on subjects of economic or general concern; endeavouring at the same time to raise no false expectations, to outrage no individual opinion, and to keep out of sight everything that would set mankind by the ears.\*

It is so far favourable to the performance of these resolutions, that our task is becoming daily more easy, in consequence of society having outlived differences which used to excite hostile and unpleasant emotions. Much clearer views are now also entertained on subjects that were formerly treated with comparative indifference. Great, for example, have been the advances since 1832 with respect to the accountability and punishment of criminals, the treatment of the poor and the insane, the temperance, cause, the education and management of infants, the preservation of peace and repression of war, the commercial intercourse among nations, the transmission of letters by post, the abolition of exclusive monopolies and privileges, the slave trade and slavery, the shortening of the hours of

labour and other means of insuring health, the sanitary improvement of towns, and, generally speaking, everything which tends to elevate the mental condition of the people.

With regard to the advances contemporaneously made in the arts, they are in themselves a wonder, and inspire the highest hopes of what is yet in store for busy and energetic-minded England. It is not the least remarkable fact in relation to these movements, that not one of them was projected or primarily assisted by any statesman, university, corporation, or other influential power. Even men of reputed learning had little or nothing to do with them. The whole were the suggestion of thoughtful persons moving in no high sphere of life. Opinions first combated as visionary, were afterwards embraced as truths. The press—that modern marvel—caught the general enthusiasm; and finally, statesmen and legislatures yielded a lagging adherence to what half the world had long since given their assent. The work of social, moral, physical improvement has, in a word, been of and by the people. Logic has not done it, mathematics have not done it, classical learning and endowments have not done it. The industrious and almost self-taught section of the people of Great Britain have alone done it. The honour is entirely theirs. How curious a tale to be hereafter told by the historian, that the great steps in civilisation which marked the second quarter of the nineteenth century were in no respect promoted, but actually retarded, by ministers of the crown; by all the learned bodies, so called; as well as by nearly every individual who, by his wealth, rank, or station, might have been reasonably expected to aid in the movement!

The necessary meliorations are not all completed. Society is only growing up to a due perception of many things which it is desirable to rectify for the sake of general happiness. The question of national education cannot now rest till divested of narrow views, and placed on a broad practical basis. This, we expect, will be the great work of the ensuing ten years. The condition of the accumulating masses of poor in large towns is likewise a problem requiring much consideration. A reorganisation of rural management is evidently necessary, for it is intimately connected with the subsistence of the people. Along with this, the game laws and laws of entail will require considerable modification. The practice of interring, and also that of having abattoirs, in towns, are discredit to the age, and cannot long endure. Why there is no system of registration for heritable property, no proper or safe receptacle for public records, and no public prosecution for offences, in England, while Scotland has all these, excites a reasonable degree of surprise. So also is it unaccountable, that while England is provided with a general system of registration for births, marriages, and deaths, there is nothing of the kind in Scotland, and neither has the latter country any coroner's inquest. More than one-half of all the public charities and philanthropic bequests, in England, are in a state of abeyance and dilapidation, for lack of a vigilant and controlling power. The committing of nearly the whole business of public conveyance to private and practically irresponsible companies, is already felt to have been a grievous error in legislation. Other things requiring to be considered and amended will occur to every one. So far as any of these momentous questions fall within the scope of our paper, they will as usual engage a due degree of attention. Nor will less interesting matters connected with the feelings and affections, along with all proper subjects of amusement and instruction, cease to form a principal part of our material. While helping the world on its way, in as far as our poor abilities serve, we can still promise to entertain the young, to cheer the desponding, and to recommend love and kindness among all.

\* Pursuing a similar line of policy with respect to our EDUCATIONAL COURSE, we have found that series of school-books (to which particular sects find no difficulty in supplementing their own doctrinal treatises) adopted in India and other countries, where books constructed on a different plan would probably have been excluded. A gratifying instance of this wide acceptability has just fallen under our notice in an Indian newspaper, 'The Bombay Witness' for October 8, 1846:—'CHAMBERS'S MORAL CLASS-BOOK, translated into Marhatta by Hurroo Kesowjee, 226 pages, royal 8vo. This work is a valuable addition to Marhatta literature, and we are rejoiced to see the translation from so skilful a hand. The subjects discussed are most important; and the instruction is communicated, not in a dry didactic style, but for the most part by means of fables and anecdotes—a method peculiarly adapted to the present state of the native community. The following are the titles of some of the chapters—Conduct towards Animals, Conduct towards Relations, Industry, Modesty, Temperance, Contentment, Benevolence, Conscientiousness, Truth, Love of our Country, &c. The work has been prepared and published at the expense of the Board of Education, and is sold at one rupee and twelve annas per copy. As the translator has endeavoured to follow the original closely, it will be found useful to those engaged in the study of English, and to Europeans who are studying Marhatta.'

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